

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ENGINEERS FOR ELECTRICAL SAFETY

ELECTRICAL SAFETY PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION SCHEME (ESPCS)

PROVISIONAL APPROVAL SYSTEM FOR PERSONNEL CERTIFICATION BODIES

1. Introduction

The **National Federation of Engineers for Electrical Safety (NFE)** is developing a provisional approval system for personnel certification bodies (PrCBs). This system aims to facilitate the operation of these bodies under the **Electrical Safety Professional Certification Scheme (ESPCS)**.

2. Objective

The objective of this document is to define the criteria and process of provisionally approving personnel certification bodies under the Electrical Safety Professional Certification Scheme for Professionals to promote uniformity in its implementation among the Personnel Certification Bodies (from now on PrCBs),

The personnel certification bodies (PrCBs), in order to operate under the **Electrical Safety Professional Certification Scheme (ESPCS)**, hereinafter referred to as the **Scheme**, are required to eventually comply with the requirements specified in ISO 17024 and the additional requirements prescribed by the Scheme owner, NFE.

The PrCBs would not be able to offer certification to any electrical safety professional or offer their process for witnessing as part of accreditation process to the accreditation body to get accreditation, or to get the relevant scope added in their accreditation, if already accredited, unless they are approved under the Scheme.

Further, in order to launch the Scheme, it is necessary that some PrCBs are available at the beginning.

Consequently, it is necessary to establish a procedure for provisional approval of PrCBs under the Scheme until such time that they can get the scope added in their accreditation or get formal accreditation from the **National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB)** and approval from the Scheme owner, **NFE**.

Note: Until such time the market develops, NFE, as Scheme owner, may directly evaluate candidates. The individual certifications directly done by NFE shall be transferred to any of the approved PrCBs as soon as possible.

3. Scope

This document defines the system for provisional approval for PrCBs to enable them to operate under the Scheme pending formal accreditation of the PrCBs for the Scheme by NABCB as per the prescribed international standard(s) and approval by NFE.

This approval shall be valid for a period of two years within which the provisionally approved PrCB shall have to obtain formal NABCB accreditation and approval from NFE.

4. Criteria for Approval

The PrCB desirous of operating under this Scheme shall meet the criteria as prescribed in this document.

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5. General Requirements

5.1 Legal Entity: The PrCB shall be a legal entity, or shall be a defined part of a legal entity, such that it can be held legally responsible for all its certification activities. A governmental PrCB is deemed to be a legal entity on the basis of its governmental status. A PrCB that is part of an organisation involved in functions other than certification shall be separate and identifiable within that organisation.

5.2 Impartiality:

- a) The PrCB shall be impartial.
- b) The PrCB shall be so structured and managed as to safeguard their impartiality.
- c) The PrCB and its personnel shall not engage in any activity that may conflict with their impartiality.
- d) The PrCB shall require personnel involved in the certification process to sign a contract or other document by which they commit themselves to declare any prior and/or present association (which may cause conflict of interest).
- e) The PrCB and any part of the same legal entity or entities under its organisational control shall not be the designer, implementer, operator, or maintainer of any service or product related to electrical safety, or offer or provide training or consultancy on electrical safety to professionals.
- f) The PrCB shall ensure that activities of separate legal entities, with which the PrCB or the legal entity of which it forms a part has links, do not compromise the impartiality of its certification activities. In particular, the PrCB shall not certify any professional who may have received training from such a linked entity.
- g) The PrCB shall act impartially in relation to its applicants, candidates, and certified persons.
- h) The PrCB shall have a process on an ongoing basis to identify, analyse, evaluate, monitor, and document the threats to impartiality arising from its activities including any conflicts arising from its relationships.
- i) This shall include those threats that may arise from its activities, or from its relationships, or from the relationships of its personnel. In case of any threats to impartiality, the PrCB shall document and demonstrate how it eliminates or minimises such threats and document any residual risk. The demonstration shall cover all potential threats that are identified, whether they arise from within the PrCB, or from the activities of other persons, bodies, or organisations.
- j) Top management shall review any residual risk to determine if it is within the level of acceptable risk. When a relationship poses an unacceptable threat to impartiality, then certification shall not be provided.
- k) The risk assessment process shall include identification of and consultation with appropriate interested parties to advice on matters affecting impartiality including openness and public perception.

NOTE 1 Sources of threats to impartiality of the PrCB can be based on ownership, governance, management, personnel, shared resources, finances, contracts, training, marketing, and payment of a sales commission, or other inducement for the referral of new clients, among others.

NOTE 2 One way of fulfilling the consultation with the interested parties is by the use of an impartiality committee.

l) The PrCB shall have a process to ensure that the examiner is free of any conflict of interest with the applicant(s) by means of being a teacher in the recent past. A separation of two years is considered acceptable for the purpose.

6. Liability and financing

6.1 The PrCB shall have the financial resources necessary for the operation of a certification process and have adequate arrangements (e.g. insurance or reserves) to cover associated liabilities.

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7. Organisational Structure

7.1 The PrCB shall define and document the duties, responsibilities, and reporting structure of its personnel and any committee and its place within the organisation.

7.2 When the PrCB is a defined part of a legal entity, documentation of the organisational structure shall include the line of authority and the relationship to other parts within the same legal entity.

8. Publicly Available Information

8.1 The PrCB shall maintain a website for providing information about the Scheme and its certification activities under the Scheme.

8.2 The PrCB shall maintain and make public relevant information describing its certification processes for granting, maintaining, extending, renewing, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification, and about the certification activities and geographical areas in which it operates.

8.3 The PrCB shall make public relevant information about applications registered and certifications granted, suspended, or withdrawn.

8.4 The PrCB shall make its processes for handling appeals and complaints available publicly on its website..

9. Confidentiality

9.1 The PrCB shall ensure confidentiality of information obtained in the course of its certification activities by having a suitably secure system.

10. Security

10.1 The PrCB shall develop and document policies and procedures to ensure security throughout the certification process.

11 Use of Certificates and Marks of Conformity (Refer document on Use of certificates, logos and mark)

12. Technical Requirements

12.1 Personnel

a) The PrCB shall have, as part of its own organisation, personnel, either employed or on contract, having sufficient competence for managing the certification operations for this Scheme.

b) The PrCB shall have defined processes for selecting, training, and formally authorising and monitoring the performance of its personnel involved in carrying out the various certification activities and for selecting technical experts, if needed, as per the requirements of this Scheme.

12.2 Competence

Competence is defined for examiner, invigilator, and decision maker:

a) Examiner: The examiner shall meet the following requirements:

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i) Education – Degree in electrical engineering.

ii) Work Experience – The examiner shall have at least 15 years of working experience of which at least two years is in the field in which the candidate is being examined.

The PrCB shall have a process of qualifying the examiners by a more senior professional. The PrCB shall also define the competence requirements of the senior professional who will qualify the examiners as per the internal evaluation by the PrCB against the competence criteria prescribed under this Scheme.

b) Invigilator: At least a graduate, who does not have the knowledge of electrical safety as defined in the Scheme.

c) Decision maker: The individual, or the team, which makes the decision shall have the competence of the examiner, but has not taken part in the examination process.

The PrCB shall have a documented description of the responsibilities and qualifications of other personnel involved in the assessment process.

12.3 Selection of Evaluation Team

The evaluation team may consist of one or more members. The PrCB shall ensure the competence of the evaluation team as stated below:

a) The PrCB may include evaluators who do not have the requisite qualifications as prescribed above, as part of the evaluation team, provided they are supported by technical experts (TEs) who meet the aforementioned qualifications.

b) The time spent by the TE on an evaluation shall be in addition to the evaluation time which the PrCB is expected to spend.

c) In case of an evaluation team having more than one member, one of the evaluators shall be designated as team leader.

13. Personnel Records

The PrCB shall maintain up-to-date personnel records, as per requirements of the Scheme, of each of its personnel involved in its certification/ inspection activities.

14. Outsourcing/Subcontracting - The PrCB operating the ESP Certification Scheme shall not outsource any activity other than conducting physical or online tests.

15. Certification Process

15.1 The PrCB shall manage the process of certification as per the documented “ESPCS - Certification Process” prescribed under the Scheme.

15.2 The PrCB shall maintain records to demonstrate that the certification process is effectively fulfilled.

15.3 The PrCB shall ensure the requirements of the Scheme are fulfilled.

15.4 The PrCB shall certify ES professionals only under the Scheme and shall use the logo of the Scheme in the certificates issued to the certified professionals as prescribed under the Scheme.

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15.5 The PrCB shall have written agreement with the certified professionals on the use of the certificate and the Scheme logo.

15.6 The PrCB shall have a process to handle appeals against any decision by the candidates.

15.7 The PrCB shall have a process to handle complaints from the users of the services of the PrCB or any other stake holder.

16. Approval Process

16.1 Application

a) Any organisation interested in approval as a PrCB for the purpose of this Scheme may apply to the NFE in the prescribed application format along with the prescribed application fee. The applicant shall also enclose the required information and documents as specified in the application form.

b) The filled in application form for approval shall be duly signed by the CEO/authorised representative/s of the PrCB seeking approval.

c) On receipt of the application form, it shall be scrutinised at NFE and those found complete in all respects will be processed further.

16.2 Assessment Process

- a) On acceptance of the application after review, an assessment team comprising a team leader and member(s)/technical expert(s) shall be nominated by NFE for the purpose of assessment at the applicant's office and other locations, if required. Under normal circumstances, the assessment at the applicant's head office will be for a total of two mandays including the TE. In case the applicant PrCB already holds an accreditation as per ISO 17024, the assessment duration may be reduced by half a day.
- b) The names of the members of the assessment team along with their CVs shall be communicated to the applicant PrCB, giving them adequate time to raise any objection against the appointment of any of the team member(s), which will then be dealt by NFE on merit basis. All assessors/technical experts nominated by NFE shall have signed undertakings regarding confidentiality and conflict of interest.
- c) NFE may decide, based on the report of office assessment or otherwise, to undertake witness assessment(s) of actual evaluation or any part of the certification process by the applicant PrCB.
- d) The assessment team leader shall provide an assessment plan to the applicant PrCB ahead of the assessment.
- e) The date(s) of assessment shall be mutually agreed upon between the applicant PrCB and the NFE/assessment team.
- f) The office assessment shall begin with an opening meeting for explaining the purpose and scope of assessment and the methodology of the assessment. The actual assessment process shall cover review of the documented system of the organisation to assess its adequacy in line with the assessment criteria as specified. It will also involve verification of the implementation of the system including scrutiny of the records of personnel competence and other relevant records and demonstration of personnel competence through means like interviews, etc. In short, it will be an assessment for verifying technical competence of the applicant PrCB for operating under the Scheme.
- g) At the end of the office assessment, through a formal closing meeting, all the nonconformities and concerns observed in the applicant PrCB's system as per the assessment criteria and the assessment team's recommendation to NFE, shall be conveyed to the applicant PrCB.

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16.3 Decision:

Based on the assessment report and the action taken by the applicant on the nonconformities/concerns, if any, NFE shall take a decision on whether to

- a) grant provisional approval to the applicant as PrCB under the Scheme, or
- b) undertake witness assessments(s) for reasons to be communicated prior to granting of provisional approval,

16.4 Validity of Approval

- a) The approval shall be valid for a period of two years, after ensuring
 - i) complete compliance to these provisional approval criteria based on evaluation reports,
 - ii) certification scheme requirements, and
 - iii) satisfactory resolution of nonconformities and concerns raised, if any
- b) The PrCB shall obtain formal accreditation as per ISO 17024 from NABCB within one year of approval by NFE.
- c) Based on the request of PrCB and review of previous approval status, it may be decided to extend the period of validity; in such situations, the PrCB shall be assessed covering both office and witness assessments, as decided by NFE, prior to such an extension.

16.5 Maintaining provisional approval:

- a) The provisional approval is granted for two years subject to annual on-site assessment along with at least one witness assessment per year.
- b) The approved PrCB shall inform NFE without delay about any changes relevant to its approval, in any aspect of its status or operation relating to;
 - i) Its legal, commercial, ownership or organisational status,
 - ii) The organisation, top management, and key personnel,
 - iii) Main policies, resources, premises, and scope of approval, and
 - iv) Other such matters that may affect the ability of the PrCB to fulfil requirements for approval.

NFE shall examine such information and decide on the issue on merits with or without an on-site verification.

- c) The provisional approval shall be subject to suspension/withdrawal with due notice of 15 days in the event of any noncompliance to the requirements of the Scheme.
- d) The PrCB shall send data of the candidates certified/rejected immediately after issue of the certificate/conclusion of evaluation to the scheme owner. The data should be sent in the specified format for maintaining the registry of the professionals.

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17. Fee

17.1 The following fee structure shall apply:

- a) Application fee - INR XX
- b) Manday charges - INR XX
- c) Travel / stay - On actuals
- d) The PrCB shall pay NFE an amount of INR xxx per certificate for the certificates issued to the certified professionals.

17.2 NFE at its discretion may revise/ levy any other fee necessary with due notice to the PrCB.